STUDI FRANCESI

Studi Francesi
Rivista quadrimestrale fondata da Franco Simone

168 (LVI | III) | 2012
Varia

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OpenEdition Journals

Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/studifrancesi/3599
DOI: 10.4000/studifrancesi.3599
ISSN: 2421-5856

Publisher
Rosenberg & Sellier

Printed version
Date of publication: 1 December 2012
Number of pages: 422-436
ISSN: 0039-2944

Electronic reference
Michael Tilby, "Poetry, image, and post-Napoleonic politics: Baudelaire's "Le Squelette laboureur"", *Studi Francesi* [Online], 168 (LVI | III) | 2012, Online since 30 November 2015, connection on 06 March 2021. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/studifrancesi/3599 ; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/studifrancesi.3599

Poetry, image, and post-Napoleonic politics: Baudelaire's "Le Squelette laboureur"

Dans les planches d'anatomie
Qui traînent sur ces quais poudreux
Où maint livre cadavéreux
Dort comme une antique momie,

Dessins auxquels la gravité
Et le savoir d'un vieil artiste,
Bien que le sujet en soit triste,
Ont communiqué la Beauté,

On voit, ce qui rend plus complètes
Ces mystérieuses horreurs,
Bêchant comme des laboureurs,
Des Écorchés et des Squelettes.

De ce terrain que vous fouillez,
Manants résignés et funèbres,
De tout l'effort de vos vertèbres,
Ou de vos muscles dépouillés,

Dites, quelle moisson étrange,
Forçats arrachés au charnier,
Tirez-vous, et de quel fermier
Avez-vous à remplir la grange?

Voulez-vous (d'un destin trop dur
Épouvantable et clair emblème!)
Montrer que dans la fosse même
Le sommeil promis n'est pas sûr;

Qu'envers nous le Néant est traître;
Que tout, même la Mort, nous ment,
Et que sempiternellement,
Hélas! il nous faudra peut-être

Dans quelque pays inconnu
Écorcher la terre revêche
Et pousser une lourde bêche
Sous notre pied sanglant et nu?

(Baudelaire, "Le Squelette laboureur", 1859)

"Le Squelette laboureur" has never been one of the most anthologized or discussed of Baudelaire's poems, either in France or elsewhere. Its comparative neglect may be ascribed, in part, to its differing from the majority of the poems in the second section of *Les Fleurs du mal* in not being rooted in observation of the urban populace, though one of its most striking, if rarely commented upon, features consists in the way it, in fact, constitutes a highly self-referential 'tableau parisien', with its opening images variously uniting a Parisian location, a visual art form, and the book as material object. Further disinclination to subject the poem to inquisitive scrutiny would appear to stem from the consensus surrounding the identity of its initial referent, namely the «…planches d'anatomie | Qui traînent sur ces quais poudreux». Although Édouard Maynial's belief that Baudelaire was referring to a reproduction of Brueghel's *Le Triomphe de la mort* gained currency among scholars for a time[1], Baudelaire's modern editors, following a suggestion first made by Jean Prévost[2], now routinely see these lines, and moreover those that follow, as an extended reference to the engravings in Vesalius's masterwork, *De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem*,

(1) See BAUDELAIRE, *Les Fleurs du mal*, edited by É. MAYNIAL, Paris, Fernand Roches, 1929, p. xiii; and, for example, D. J. MOSSOP, *Baudelaire's Tragic Hero. A Study of the Architecture of "Les Fleurs du mal"*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961, p. 188.

(2) See J. PRÉVOST, *Baudelaire. Essai sur l'inspiration et la création poétiques*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1953, p. 166.

first published in 1543 and often reprinted in the centuries that followed, the original drawings having seemingly been provided by Titian's studio. It is nonetheless the case that "Le Squelette laboureur" has attracted some very different English translations, by poets of the rank of Roy Campbell, Yvor Winters, and Seamus Heaney. Campbell actually translated it twice, once very freely with the title "Overture" and once less so as "The Skeleton Navvy". Winters chose as his title "The Skeleton Labourer", while Heaney's version, described as being 'after Baudelaire', is entitled "The Digging Skeleton"[3]. The very existence of such diverse English versions, and, in the case of Heaney's rendering, the fact that it would become the subject of a minor critical controversy, provide valuable pointers away from an equation of the poem with precise referential clarity. Accordingly, it will be the purpose of this article to demonstrate that the linking of "Le Squelette laboureur" to Vesalius is not wholly supported by the facts and, more importantly, that to see the poem as constituting a single, sustained example of *ekphrasis*[4] obscures the way its title and imagery combine a number of further subtle and understated associations, which relate to the nineteenth-century revival of interest in the *danse des morts*, as well as to a prominent example of Napoleonic iconography.

I.

In itself, the identification with the Vesalius engravings is highly plausible. There was significant awareness of the Brussels-born anatomist in nineteenth-century France. Balzac, in his unfinished work *Les Martyrs ignorés*, refers to «[le] grand Vésale»[5]. (As if in anticipation of Baudelaire's poem, in another fragment he describes the book boxes along the Seine as «ces catacombes de la gloire»[6]). Likewise, one of the stories in Petrus Borel's *Champavert* (1833) is entitled "Don Andréa Vésalius. L'Anatomiste", though the title character bears scant resemblance to the historical figure himself[7]. As for Baudelaire, there is no doubt that he would have been receptive to the way the Vesalius plates portray skeletons in allegorical poses[8]. That said,

(3) See R. Campbell, *Mithraic Emblems*, London, Boriswood, 1936, and *Poems: A Translation of "Les Fleurs du Mal"*, London, Harvill Press, 1952; Y. Winters, *Collected Poems*, Denver, Swallow, 1952; and S. Heaney, *North*, London, Faber, 1975. For a discussion of Heaney's version, see A. Piette, *Imitation, new air and relish*, «The Cambridge Quarterly», 20 (1991), 95-117 (pp. 111-116). Piette's article occasioned an intemperate response from G. Strickland (*Imitations or travesties?*, *ibid.*, 21 (1992), 170-173); see also Piette's rejoinder, *Mais, quand-même, Monsieur, vous exagérez!*, *ibid.*, 174-177.

(4) Interestingly from the perspective of the present discussion, David Kelley, who insists that it is only the third quatrain of "Le Squelette laboureur" that «offers any direct description of the [anatomical] image», suggests that Baudelaire's poem «could almost be thought of as a deliberate misreading of the image, the function of which is to demonstrate the human bone-structure» (D. Kelley, «Transpositions», in P. Collier and R. Lethbridge (eds.), *Artistic Relations. Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1994, pp. 178-191 (p. 183)).

(5) See Balzac, *La Comédie humaine*, edited by P.-G. Castex et al., Paris, Gallimard, 1976-81, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 12 vols, XII, p. 740.

(6) See *ibid.*, p. 536. As Claude Pichois has noted, the poet's reference to «maint livre cadavéreux» has resonance with regard to both the contents of the volumes and their condition (see Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1975-76, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2 vols, I, p. 1023, n. 2).

(7) See C. De Mulder, *L'homme au scalpel: la figure de l'anatomiste dans le roman terrifiant du XIX^e siècle*, «Neophilologus», 92 (2008), pp. 409-416; and, above all, Th. Hunkeler, *Mélancolie de l'anatomie. L'exemple de Don Andrea Vesalius de Pétrus Borel*, «Variations», 13 (2005), pp. 167-182. Hunkeler's illuminating discussion of Borel's story in its nineteenth-century medical context also establishes that although the author's depiction of Vesalius as a human vivisectionist was probably based on a dubious allegation in a letter of 1565 written by the French diplomat Hubert Languet, his account of the anatomist's lamentable death had its source in the biographical *notice* published in the 1725 edition of Vesalius's *Opera omnia*.

(8) See P. Labarthe, *Baudelaire et la tradition de l'allégorie*, Genève, Droz, 1999, pp. 195-196. Lab-

in order to validate the imputation of the source of "Le Squelette laboureur" to the discovery of a copy of *De humani corporis fabrica* by the bibliophile poet, it is habitually claimed by Baudelaire's commentators that among the illustrations to Vesalius's volume are to be found one or more skeletons in the act of digging. Thus Antoine Adam, in his otherwise invaluable annotation to *Les Fleurs du mal*, states with regard to this poem: «Ce qui invite à penser que Baudelaire eut en effet sous les yeux l'*Anatomie* de Vésale, c'est qu'on y voit en même temps un squelette et un écorché occupés à bêcher»[9]. In reality, although the Vesalius illustrations feature both skeletons and *écorchés*, none of them is shown digging. The closest to such a depiction is a skeleton portrayed leaning on an unemployed spade, thereby conferring on it the suggestion of an allegorical figure, while also allowing it to display the rigidity needed for pedagogical purposes[10]. In other words, the spade is literally a prop. There is certainly no suggestion of the agricultural tasks to which the poet of "Le Squelette laboureur" alludes. If the Vesalius figure possesses an allusive function in allegorical terms, the only reasonable inference to draw is that the illustration gestures towards a conventional portrayal of the skeleton as gravedigger[11]. The Vesalius spade may have served as Baudelaire's starting point, but if so, the transformation from motionless pose to the act of digging, together with the immediate passage in the poem from singular to plural, leaves the original behind. Likewise, although the reference in the fourth quatrain to *vertèbres* and *muscles dépouillés* represents a renewed point of contact with the perspective of anatomical drawing, Baudelaire's skeletons are also suggestive of other, non-medical perspectives.

II.

There are many examples in late-medieval and early modern European culture that show skeletons putting a spade to good use. The posthumous, immensely erudite, and profusely illustrated two-volume essay on the *danse des morts* by the artist and historian of Rouen Eustache-Hyacinthe Langlois (1777-1837)[12], which Baudelaire is

arthe, who draws on the study by John E. Jackson (see below, n. 13), persists in the assumption that it was Vesalius's volume that provided the poet with his starting point.

(9) Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal*, edited by A. Adam, Paris, Garnier, 1961, p. 388, n. 3. See also F.W. Leakey, *Baudelaire: "Les Fleurs du mal"*, Landmarks in World Literature, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 46. The fact that Prévost's *rapprochement* was made only tentatively, and that the critic himself pointed out that, in the wake of Vesalius's work, many other anatomical depictions of skeletons were published, has largely been ignored. Prévost was similarly careful to observe that the identification of a precise source for Baudelaire's *planches d'anatomie* was, anyway, a matter of only incidental interest for an appreciation of the poem.

(10) See Vesalius, *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, 7 vols, Basel, 1543, I, p. 163.

(11) As may be more obviously inferred, for example, from the spade gripped by the skeleton in the illustrations of 'L'Astrologien' and 'Le Médecin' in Guyot Marchant's *La Grant Danse macabre des hommes et des femmes* of 1485 (for a description of the figures in this work see J. Saugnieux, *Les Danses macabres de France et d'Espagne et leurs prolongements littéraires*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1972, p. 20; see also N. Zemon Davis, *Holbein's "Pictures of Death" and the Reformation at Lyon*, «Studies in the Renaissance», 3 (1956), 104-30).

(12) E.-H. Langlois, *Essai historique, philosophique et pittoresque sur les danses des morts*, Rouen, Lebrument, 1851, 2 vols. This was an expansion of a long essay devoted to an example Langlois had discovered at Saint-Maclou in Rouen, which he had published in 1832, firstly in the «Bulletin de la Société d'émulation de Rouen» and then separately as *Rouen au XVI^e siècle et la danse des morts du cimetière de Saint-Maclou* (Rouen, Édouard frères). Contrary to the assertion of Yvonne Bargues-Rollins, who assumes *Rouen au XVI^e siècle* to be an entirely separate work and appears to have been confused also by the existence of Langlois's *Essai historique et descriptif sur la peinture sur verre*, which was likewise published by Édouard frères in 1832, there was no 1832 Édouard frères edition of the *Essai sur les danses des morts* (see Bargues-Rollins, *Le Pas de Flaubert: une danse macabre*, Paris, Champion, 1998, p. 22, n. 4).

known to have consulted and which gave him the idea for a possible, though in fact rejected, frontispiece for the second edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*[13], offered abundant illustrations of skeletons bearing, and sometimes utilizing, both scythes (in evocation of the 'Grim Reaper') and spades, while, as Antoine Adam himself pointed out with regard to "Le Squelette laboureur"[14], the fourth woodcut in the younger Holbein's influential series *Les Simulachres de la mort*, first published in Lyons in 1538, shows a skeleton wielding a spade alongside biblical Adam, the inspiration clearly deriving from the *maledicta terra* of Genesis, 3,17. The French quatrain based on the biblical text reads:

> Mauldicte en ton labeur la terre.
> En labeur ta vie useras,
> Jusques que la Mort te soubterre.
> Toy pouldre en pouldre tourneras.

The drawing had no title, but the description contained in the 1790 version of the work (re-named *Le Triomphe de la mort*), in which the engravings, based on the original woodcuts, were by Wenceslaus Hollar[15], entitled it "La Condamnation au travail"[16], thereby presenting a still more obvious link with "Le Squelette laboureur"[17]. Overall in the Holbein tradition, the land being dug extended beyond the graveyard to incorporate agricultural fields. There was, in other words, much to encourage an imaginative transformation of the single skeleton of the title and the *planche*

The Bibliothèque municipale de Rouen appears, however, to possess three different versions of the Lebrument edition. On the 'romantic revival of the *danse macabre*' (which was encouraged by the general rediscovery of the medieval Gothic) and Flaubert's familiarity with both Langlois himself and his research, see BARGUES-ROLLINS, *Le Pas de Flaubert* and S. WEBSTER GOODWIN, *Emma Bovary's Dance of Death*, «Novel», 19 (1986), pp. 197-215. It might be added that Flaubert included a Langlois and a Mme Langlois as inhabitants of Yonville in *Madame Bovary*. The sixteen-year-old Flaubert had penned his own *Danse des morts*. For the text and an informative 'notice' by Guy Sagnes, see FLAUBERT, *Œuvres de jeunesse*, edited by C. GOTHOT-MERSCH and G. SAGNES, Paris, Gallimard, 2001, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, pp. 403-43 and 1334-1340). See also J. BRUNEAU, *Les Débuts littéraires de Gustave Flaubert*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1962, pp. 197-201.

(13) See Baudelaire's letter to Nadar of 16 May 1859 (BAUDELAIRE, *Correspondance*, edited by C. PICHOIS and J. ZIEGLER, Paris, Gallimard, 1973, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2 vols, I, p. 577); and J. E. JACKSON, *La Mort Baudelaire. Essai sur "Les Fleurs du mal"* (Études baudelairiennes X), Neuchâtel, La Baconnière, 1982, p. 97. A frontispiece to this design, etched by Félicien Rops, would, in 1866, decorate the poems Baudelaire published as *Les Épaves* (see E. HOLTZMAN, *Félicien Rops and Baudelaire: evolution of a frontispiece*, «Art Journal», 38 (1978), pp. 102-106).

(14) *Les Fleurs du Mal*, ed. ADAM, p. 387, n. 1.

(15) See R. PENNINGTON, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Wenceslaus Hollar 1607-1677*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 28-30. This was the version in which the series would have been most familiar in nineteenth-century France. Its title could not have failed to attract Baudelaire.

(16) The description read: 'HOLBEIN, pour marquer en même temps le genre de travail qui est le partage de l'homme, et celui qui est le partage de la femme, représente Adam occupé à déraciner un arbre, avec la Mort qui l'aide de toutes ses forces; et un peu plus loin, Ève allaitant son enfant et tenant une quenouille' (*Le Triomphe de la mort gravé d'après les dessins de Hans Holbein par W. Hollar*, London, 1790; according to Gabriel Peignot's essay of 1826, *Recherches historiques sur les danses des morts*, the accompanying *explications* are by Jean-Michel Papillon, author of a *Traité historique et pratique de la gravure en bois* (1766)).

(17) A. ADAM (*Les Fleurs du mal*, p. 387, n. 1) notes that another of Holbein's *Simulachres de la mort* features 'Le Laboureur', but there is nothing in "Le Squelette laboureur" that can be said to derive from the artist's drawing, which portrays a (spadeless) skeleton whipping the ploughman's horse. Previously, PRÉVOST (*Baudelaire*, pp. 164-165) had not only pointed out that this engraving was the inspiration for the opening of George Sand's *La Mare au Diable*, but had also maintained that it was the source of inspiration for another of Baudelaire's poems: "La Rançon" (*Nouvelles Fleurs du mal*). This latter claim has, however, been called into question by Jean Pommier and Claude Pichois (see PICHOIS's note in BAUDELAIRE, *Œuvres complètes*, I, p. 1158). Also to be noted is that one of the illustrations in Guyot Marchant's *La Grant Danse macabre* of 1485, to which reference will be made subsequently, features 'Un laboureur'. A ploughman features, likewise, in other visual representations of the *danse macabre*.

d'anatomie (which are not to be thought of as wholly synonymous) into a plurality of 'squelettes qui bêchaient'. The *danse des morts*, or *danse macabre*, which explicitly provided the poet with the starting point for another of the "Tableaux parisiens" (in the form of the poem entitled "Danse macabre"[18]), was by definition plural, it being necessary to demonstrate that Death visits men and women of every estate and (in order to keep the artist employed) of varied occupations. The incorporation in "Le Squelette laboureur" of a layer of imagery and associations deriving from the *danse des morts* may be considered confirmed by Baudelaire's phrase «forçats arrachés au charnier», in that the charnel house was part of the iconography of the *danse*, the most celebrated French example being that which had for centuries decorated the Cimetière des Innocents in Paris (demolished in 1786); engravings survived that showed skulls piled in the roof space[19]. The Paris *danse des morts*, which was widely held to be the source of the woodcuts in Guyot Marchant's seminal *La Grant Danse macabre des hommes et des femmes*, nonetheless possessed a link with Vesalius, in that it was in the Cimetière des Innocents that the anatomist claimed to have had first familiarized himself with human bones[20]. As Balzac observed, in generic terms, in 1833: «il faut être anatomiste pour s'amuser dans un cimetière!»[21].

The applicability of the *danse des morts* to what Baudelaire called «la vie moderne» had already been noted by certain nineteenth-century visual caricaturists, the most notable of whom was Grandville, who in 1830 had begun an updated version of the topos under the series title *Voyage pour l'éternité*. Balzac duly gave the series an obvious puff in *La Silhouette*[22], though it cannot be assumed that Baudelaire knew any of the nine caricatures that reached publication, given the absence of reference to the series in his discussion of Grandville's art in *Sur quelques caricaturistes français*[23].

III.

The tradition of the *danse macabre* was not, however, the only field of reference to combine with the perspective of anatomical engravings in "Le Squelette laboureur", as may be seen from further consideration of the activity in which Baudelaire's skeletons are shown to engage in quatrains 4 and 5. The picture is of hard labour (with the reference to *forçats* in line 18 aligning the poem with the Romantic topos of the prison, in general, and with Baudelaire's belief that all true artists are *âmes enfer-*

(18) Baudelaire's initial title for "Danse macabre" was "Le Squelette". In his letter of 1 January 1859 to the editor of the «Revue contemporaine», Alphonse de Calonne, he highlighted «l'ironie criarde des anciennes danses macabres et des images allégoriques du moyen âge» (BAUDELAIRE, *Correspondance*, I, p. 535).

(19) The reference to Orcagna in an early version of "Le Mauvais Moine" supports Prévost's view that this latter poem had as its starting point the *Trionfo della morte* in the Campo-Santo in Pisa, which was at that time attributed to Orcagna (see PRÉVOST, *Baudelaire*, pp. 160-61). Baudelaire would probably have seen a reproduction of this work in the album (1841) accompanying Alexandre du Sommerand's *Les Arts au Moyen-Age*, and would have been able to read a description of it in Hippolyte Fortoul, *Essai sur les poëmes et les images de la Danse des morts* of 1842 (see F.W. LEAKEY, *Baudelaire: Collected Essays, 1953-1988*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 257-258, n. 10).

(20) See ANDREAS VESALIUS, *On the Fabric of the Human Body*, translated by W.F. RICHARDSON and J. BURD CARMAN, 3 vols, San Francisco, Norman Publishing, 1998, I, pp. [ix]-x.

(21) «Fragments d'un roman publié sous l'Empire par un auteur inconnu (*Olympia ou les Vengeances romaines*)», in BALZAC, *Œuvres diverses*, edited by R. CHOLLET and R. GUISE, Paris, Gallimard, 1990-96, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2 vols, II, p. 1179.

(22) BALZAC, *Œuvres diverses*, II, pp. 721-722.

(23) As James Hiddleston has noted, Baudelaire's evaluation of Grandville might well have taken on a different character, had he included *Voyage pour l'éternité* within his purview (J. A. HIDDLESTON, *Baudelaire and the Art of Memory*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1999, pp. 156-157).

mées[24], in particular). John E. Jackson, in a rare attempt by a critic to engage with the specificity of "Le Squelette laboureur", has argued that these images of work possess «un sens profond»[25]: he sees Baudelaire employing the metaphor of serfdom to evoke an exploitation of the proletariat that he identifies elsewhere in *Les Fleurs du mal*, most notably in "Le Crépuscule du matin". Such a reading might be held to reinforce the medieval associations of the *danse des morts*. Yet, however valid Jackson's interpretation, the *squelette laboureur* of Baudelaire's title may, still more particularly, be seen as an echo of the idealized (and highly politicized) figure of the *soldat laboureur*, who after the end of the Napoleonic wars was ready to «turn his sword into a ploughshare and resume his other battle with the soil»[26]. To be in a position to experience the connotations of an allusion to this at the time familiar figure requires, however, a fair degree of detailed historical reconstruction.

Whether nameless or in the scarcely less generic form of 'Nicolas Chauvin', the *soldat laboureur* had been a remarkably successful exercise in propaganda in the period after 1815, with the term continuing to exert an attraction in the decades after the publication of *Les Fleurs du mal*[27]. During the Restoration, above all, it gave rise to vaudevilles[28], *chansons*[29], and works such as P[ierre] C[olau]'s *Le Soldat laboureur ou les héros cultivateurs, choix d'actions mémorables, pour faire suite aux invincibles et aux grenadiers français* (Vauquelin, 1822), which gives an alphabetical list of former army officers who had distinguished themselves in war and who, if they survived, had often become 'laboureurs'[30]. It also spawned engravings and other artifacts, a number of which are listed for the purpose of example by Balzac in *La Rabouilleuse*. In the passage in question, the Balzacian narrator, in explanation of the journalist Finot's allusion to the 'soldat-laboureur', refers to the «déluge de gravures, de paravents, de pendules, de bronzes et de plâtres auquel donna lieu l'idée du Soldat Laboureur,

(24) See V. Brombert, *The Romantic Prison. The French Tradition*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 141; Baudelaire's phrase comes from *Le Salon de 1859*. Brombert further observes: «The prison image – the poet uses the striking expression «*l'ennui de nos prisons*» – becomes the metaphor of the guilt and grief of living» (*ibid.*).

(25) Jackson, *La Mort Baudelaire*, pp. 108-112. The other relatively extensive discussion of "Le Squelette laboureur" is to be found in Labarthe, *Baudelaire et la tradition de l'allégorie*, pp. 195-197.

(26) D. M. Hopkin, *Soldier and Peasant in French Popular Culture 1766-1870*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2003, p. 286. Hopkin bases his discussion on the important study by G. de Puymège, *Chauvin, le soldat-laboureur*, Paris, Gallimard, 1997. See also Hopkin, *La Ramée, the archetypal soldier as an indicator of popular attitudes towards the army in nineteenth-century France*, «French History», 14.2 (2000), 115-149; J. Vidalenc, *Les Demi-Solde, étude d'une catégorie sociale*, Paris, M. Rivière, 1955; and the richly documented article by N. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Sad Cincinnatus: "Le Soldat laboureur" as an image of the Napoleonic veteran after the Empire*, «Arts Magazine», 60.9 (1986), pp. 65-75.

(27) The figure made its first appearance in Épinal woodcuts in 1814 (see Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Sad Cincinnatus*, p. 75, n. 2).

(28) See *Le Soldat laboureur*, Théâtre du Cirque Olympique, 10 March 1819 and its sequel: Franconi and Ponet, *Le Soldat-fermier, ou le bon seigneur*, 18 January 1821; Francis, Brazier, and Dumersan, *Les Moissonneurs de la Beauce, ou le Soldat laboureur*, Théâtre des Variétés, 1 September 1821; Théaulon, Dartois and de Rancé, *Le Laboureur ou Tout pour le roi, tout pour la France!*, Théâtre français, 14 August 1823 (in honour of Louis XVIII's birthday the following day); Jacques-André Jacquelin, *Le Vétéran, ou le retour du soldat laboureur*, Paris, Bezou,1824; and Puymège, *Chauvin*, pp. 71-72.

(29) For example Antoine-Joseph-Michel Romagnesi's romance "Le Soldat laboureur", which derives from *Les Moissonneurs de la Beauce*, and Émile Debraux's song of the same title (1840). See also *Le Soldat laboureur ou le moissonneur de la Beauce, almanach chantant et théâtrale* [sic], arrangé par F. Letellier and L. André, Paris, Stahl, 1822. The undated London printing of Romagnesi's romance (1835 is the date suggested bv the BL catalogue) contains an engraving that depicts the *soldat laboureur* leaning on his spade, with a rudimentary plough to the left.

(30) The engraving that forms its frontispiece depicts an exemplary veteran behind his plough. It is reproduced in Athanassaglou-Kallmyer, *Sad Cincinnatus*, p. 69.

grande image du sort de Napoléon et de ses braves qui a fini par engendrer plusieurs vaudevilles», adding: «Cette idée a produit au moins un million. Vous trouvez encore des Soldats Laboureurs sur des papiers de tenture, au fond des provinces»[31]. The *Larousse du XIX^e^ siècle* would later recall:

> Le soldat laboureur figurait alors partout, avait place à tous les foyers; on le rencontrait sous cadre doré dans les salons libéraux; le bourgeois et le boutiquier l'honoraient d'une bordure de bois peint; suspendu par quatre clous, il avait sa place marquée à la muraille de l'ouvrier et du paysan. Puis les enseignes profitèrent de sa vogue, et les devants de cheminée se disputèrent sa moustache grise, son bonnet de police, sa croix d'honneur et sa bêche.

There were indeed numerous visual depictions of the figure, most notably those by Horace Vernet and Charlet. As will be seen, the influence of the former in this regard was seminal.

When sold in 1827, Vernet's painting of the figure (executed in 1820 for his patron the duc d'Orléans and now in the Wallace Collection) was given the following, historically precise description: «Un ancien soldat de la vieille garde impériale… aide son vieux père à cultiver ses champs»[32]. Beneath the soldier's plough, the gaping ground reveals a cuirassier's helmet and coat. In his left hand, the *soldat-laboureur* is holding the combattant's 'croix d'honneur'. Vernet's painting, which was translated into a poem by Henri de Latouche that advertised itself as a 'cantate d'après le tableau de M. Horace Vernet'[33], was popularized in the form of at least two different engravings. J.-P.-M. Jazet's 1821 example carried Delille's translation of lines 493-497 of Book 1 of Virgil's *Georgics*, which has the plough of the Roman veteran digging up 'old spears', 'helmets'; and 'heroic bones'[34]. Fleuret's somewhat freer woodcut

(31) Balzac, *La Comédie humaine*, IV, p. 313 and Pierre Citron's informative note in Balzac, *La Rabouilleuse*, Paris, Garnier, 1966, pp. 68-69. The *soldat-laboureur* also gave his name to a variety of pear tree. G.L. Brismontier's *Petit Dictionnaire critique et anecdotique des enseignes de Paris, par un batteur de pavé* of 1826, which, as Bruce Tolley has established, was printed by Balzac but not compiled by him (see Tolley, *Balzac the printer*, «French Studies», 13 (1959), pp. 214-225 (p. 216)), lists a draper's shop (*marchand de nouveautés*) with the name 'Au soldat laboureur' in the rue Saint-Denis and another similar establishment, with the name 'Au soldat cultivateur', in the rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine (*L'Œuvre de Balzac*, edited by A. Béguin and J.A. Ducourneau, Paris, Club français du livre, 1966, 16 vols, XIV, pp. 250 & 277). For a further shop called 'Au Soldat laboureur', founded in 1835, see Puymège, *Chauvin*, ill. 15. Of the shop in the rue Saint-Denis, it is said by Brismontier: «Si cet établissement avait autant de vogue que le vaudeville qui a fourni l'idée de ce tableau, la fortune du marchand serait bientôt faite. A tout événement, il doit réussir, car il s'est placé sous les auspices d'hommes qui ont compté plus d'une brillante conquête» (*L'Œuvre de Balzac*, XIV, p. 250). Athanassaglou-Kallmyer, while perpetuating the common misconception that the *Petit dictionnaire critique* was written by Balzac himself, locates a valuable reference to the sign of the newly-opened shop in the rue Saint-Denis in the *Tablettes universelles* of January 1822.

(32) See J. Ingamells, *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Pictures*, London, Wallace Collection, 1985-92, 4 vols, II (1986), p. 275. Sainte-Beuve describes an early Vernet print also depicting 'le soldat laboureur': «Un soldat assis, pleurant et cachant sa face devant une mappemonde, où il vient de chercher sans doute l'île de Sainte-Hélène; son chien est couché à ses pieds, sous sa chaise» (Sainte-Beuve, *Nouveaux lundis*, 13 vols, Paris, Lévy, 1863-70, V, pp. 48-49).

(33) See H. de Latouche, *L'Académie, le romantique et la charte, satires; suivies du Soldat laboureur*, Paris, Mongie aîné, 1825, pp. 45-47. Although Latouche would be critical of Vernet's later work and, from an early date, suggested that the painter would be well advised to moderate his 'fecundity', he found much to admire in the works Vernet exhibited at the 1817 and 1819 Salons and even composed the words of a song in honour of his artistic achievement (see F. Ségu, *H. de Latouche et son intervention dans les arts*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1931, especially pp. 9-10, 20, 32 & 89).

(34) See Ingamells, *The Wallace Collection Catalogue*, II, p. 275.

of 1822, which places the dead soldier's 'croix d'honneur' in the hand of the tiller, has the particular interest for the present discussion of substituting for the items of armour and clothing a fragmented skeleton[35]. An earlier depiction of the figure, one of two painted by Pierre-Roch Vigneron in 1818 and known only through an engraving by a certain A. Moreau, had already included an unearthed skull[36]. (In this version, the disinterred soldier's *croix d'honneur* lies on the ground along with the rest of the unearthed remains). Moreover, alongside the plough, the spade featured prominently in a number of the depictions of the *soldat-laboureur*, as it had in representations of Cincinnatus[37]. As for Charlet's slightly later variation on the figure in his 1824 lithograph entitled 'Le laboureur nourrit le soldat. Le soldat défend le laboureur', it has been shown by Athanassaglou-Kallmyer to be at the heart of a contemporary revalorizing of the Cincinnatus story, implicitly advancing the message that «defending and nourishing the motherland are two facets of a true Frenchman's patriotic duty»[38].

In 1822, the plot of the vaudeville *Les Moissonneurs de la Beauce* was expanded by Dumersan into a three-volume 'philosophical novel' entitled simply *Le Soldat laboureur* [39]. It was preceded by a poem dedicated to Horace Vernet, in which Dumersan acknowledged that his novel (and, by implication, the play that preceded it) was derived from Vernet's painting:

> Le talent seul règne au Parnasse,
> L'enfant des arts y tient sa place,
> Peintre et poète y sont admis:
> Nous pouvons donc, mon cher Horace,
> Traiter en égaux, en amis.
> Mais je te rends un juste hommage
> Bien plutôt qu'un tribut flatteur:
> T'offrir le Soldat laboureur,
> C'est te présenter ton ouvrage[40].

(35) Another version of this depiction, also in the form of a woodcut dated 1822, is to be found in the Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée in Marseilles (see http://www.histoire-image.org/site/oeuvre/analyse.php?liste_analyse=198). It would appear to have the form of an alcoholic beverage label, an assumption seemingly confirmed by the centrally positioned caption: 'Schenik du Soldat laboureur'. A helpful reference to 'schenik' in the *Journal de Toulouse* for 2 December 1855 maintains that during the then current Crimean conflict French soldiers swapped their *galette* for the enemy soldiers' 'schenik (eau de vie)'. Schenik was a place name in Armenia, and I am indebted to my colleague Dr David Willis for the additional information that Armenia produced much of the brandy consumed in Eastern Europe. It is to be assumed that it was veterans of Napoleon's Russian campaign who had brought the term back to France.

(36) The engraving is reproduced as Figure 2 in Athanassaglou-Kallmyer, *Sad Cincinnatus*, p. 66. The texte of the *Petit dictionnaire critique et anecdotique des enseignes de Paris* reveals that the shop sign 'Au soldat cultivateur' was «une copie fort bien faite du beau tableau de M. Vigneron» and bore the familiar translation from the *Georgics* (*L'Œuvre de Balzac*, XIV, p. 277).

(37) See the engraving of Cincinnatus in *L'Annuaire du cultivateur* (1794) reproduced by Puymège (ill. 8) and the presence of a spade next to a sword behind the chair of 'Le soldat instituteur' drawn by Aubry (again reproduced by Puymège, ill. 18).

(38) See Athanassaglou-Kallmyer, *Sad Cincinnatus*, p. 68, where the lithograph is reproduced as Fig. 4.

(39) Published by Barba, it bore an epigraph from Voltaire: 'Sois toujours un héros, sois plus, sois citoyen' (Cicero to Caesar at the end of *Catalina, ou Rome sauvée*). Dumersan's heroine, Clémentine, is said to sing Romagnesi's romance (see above, n. 29); a footnote identifies where the sheet music could be purchased (*Le Soldat laboureur*, III, p. 15).

(40) *Ibid.*, I, p. vi.

The same poem recognizes that the painter had been inspired by the *Georgics*:

Virgile inspira les crayons
Lorsque, pleins de mélancolie,
«Ils retracèrent les sillons
Où dorment tant de bataillons,
La terre d'ossements remplie»[41].

An early episode in the novel duly depicts the 'soldat laboureur' digging and unearthing his dead comrade's 'croix d'honneur': «Signe sacré, s'écrie-t-il en la baisant; tu m'apprends qu'un frère d'armes, un français, un ami peut-être, gissait [sic] sans honneur dans mon champ»[42]. Dumersan's source for the following description would have been readily recognized by many of his readers: «Assis sur la borne du champ, appuyé contre les murailles d'une masure en ruines, tenant cette croix d'honneur dans ses mains, il y attache son regard et resta immobile et muet vis-à-vis des ossemens découverts [etc]»[43]. For the less well-informed reader he nonetheless provided a footnote, in which it is stated that «Cette description toute faible qu'elle est rappellera je pense le beau tableau d'Horace Vernet». Later it will be said that Francoeur, his carefully named central figure, «avait mis une blouse de paysan pardessus son habit»[44].

Hopkin has noted that «the self-help manuals […] in the first half of the nineteenth century looked to [the *soldat-laboureur*] for inspiration. He was the hero of the collections of virtuous stories, distributed free to children by priests and schoolteachers, and to conscripts in the army»[45]. As was seen earlier from the example of the play by Théaulon and his colleagues performed in honour of Louis XVIII's birthday[46], the Restoration was certainly willing to buy into the exemplary patriotic myth. In the words of Athanassaglou-Kallmyer: «As a dutiful Cincinnatus returning to his country retreat to mourn over the world dead, the Napoleonic soldier posed as a man after the Bourbon government's heart. His distress at the memories of war would be seen as a guarantee of his repentance»[47]. Yet as the same scholar acutely observes, this was an image easily subverted as a form of more or less subtle Opposition propaganda rooted in a desire to glorify the imperial commitment to military conquest.

From the outset the *soldat-laboureur* had, in fact, been closely associated with Bonapartism. Charles Blanc, writing in 1865, recalled that the *Soldat laboureur* was the predilection of «les bonapartistes sincères, les officiers en demi-solde»[48]. As Finot indicates in *La Rabouilleuse*[49], the figure provided the model-image for the short-lived colony in Texas which had been founded under the name 'Champ d'Asile' by some three hundred former Napoleonic officers fleeing the repression of the Restoration[50]. They included, Balzac would have us believe, the fictional Pierre Bridau[51]. In

(41) *Ibid.*, p. vii. A footnote to the three lines placed within quotation marks refers the reader to the passage in the *Georgics* that begins 'Grandia ossa…'

(42) *Ibid.*, p. 75.

(43) *Ibid.*, p. 76.

(44) *Ibid.*, III, p. 218.

(45) Hopkin, *Soldier and Peasant*, p. 287.

(46) See above, n. 28.

(47) Athanassaglou-Kallmyer, *Sad Cincinnatus*, p. 69.

(48) Quoted by Ingamells, *The Wallace Collection Catalogue*, II, p. 275.

(49) Balzac, *La Comédie humaine*, IV, p. 312.

(50) See Athanassaglou-Kallmyer, *Sad Cincinnatus*, pp. 71-72, and A. Dupuy, *Un épisode assez peu connu de notre histoire coloniale: Les soldats-laboureurs du Champ d'Asile*, «Revue de la Méditerranée», 42 (April-May 1951), pp. 191-204. Dupuy draws on the comments of Dr Louis Véron in *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*, 5 vols, Paris, Librairie nouvelle, 1856, II, and notes (p. 203): «si l'on rapproche l'histoire du Champ d'Asile des premières pages de la *Rabouilleuse*, il ressort que Balzac a très fidèlement rappelé les péripéties essentielles de ce cas de colonisation avortée». An account of the Champ d'Asile that does not appear to have been exploited by historians was also included by Pierre Colau in *Le Soldat laboureur* (pp. 193-206).

(51) Aided by *chansons* written by Béranger and

Les Moissonneurs de la Beauce, ou le Soldat laboureur, and again in Dumersan's novel of 1822, the plot hinges on the excessively modest Francoeur being sought out by the officer whose life he had saved at Austerlitz. Ingamells records that Vernet's painting was «amongst those pictures rejected for the 1822 Salon because of their alleged anti-Bourbon spirit»[52]. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer draws attention to the fact that in this same painting, as well as in a lithograph by Senefelder dating from 1823, the soldier-farmer has a «heavy moustache, a distinctive attribute of Napoleonic officers»[53]. If it is true that in *Les Moissonneurs de la Beauce*, colonel Séligny sings: «Car tout soldat qui, comme toi, | A versé son sang pour la France | A bien mérité de son roi»[54], the Restoration censor would have been unlikely to countenance an overt reference to the Emperor. Moreover, historians appear to have ignored the fact that in 1819-1820 the exiled former Emperor had himself become explicitly linked to digging. His physician Dr Antonmarchi encouraged him to dig in his garden as a means of remaining active. In the words of his nineteenth-century biographer, R. H. Horne, «The very next morning Napoleon was at work. He named Navarrez [his bodyguard], who had been used to rural occupations, his head gardener, and worked under his directions […] The Emperor became fond of his new employment. He pressed all Longwood into his service»[55]. By way of illustration, Horne's volume includes a drawing by Char-

Naudet, the Liberals, through *La Minerve française*, did much to attract public support for the project, but before the campaign was over, the Champ d'Asile had already faltered in the face of opposition from the Spanish government, the emigrants' need in many cases to make over the titles of their land to American speculators, and, allegedly, a lack of advice and direction provided by General Charles Lallemand. As a result, the emigrants attempted a further short lived settlement in Alabama (see Dupuy, *Un épisode…*, and J. Vidalenc, *Les Demi-Solde. Étude d'une catégorie sociale*, Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1955, pp. 126-129), prior to a return to France by the majority, following the repeal of the exile laws in 1819. From the beginning, opponents of the Liberals tried to besmirch the Appeal: see «La Minerve», 5 (February 1819), p. 208, for the text of a statement that had appeared in *Les Petites Affiches* alleging the bankruptcy of the *Minerve*'s publisher. They would later maintain (wrongly, it seems) that the Liberals had siphoned off the funds raised both from donations and from the sales of *Le Texas, ou Notice historique sur le Champ d'Asile*, Paris, Ladvocat, 1819, which had been penned by two of the refugees, Hartmann and Millard. Léon Brice reveals that the French police regarded the latter as a dangerous hothead and conspirator and argues, with reference to the involvement of the convicted pirate and Bonapartist Jean Lafitte, that the idealist tenor of the Champ d'Asile propaganda was a front for Lallemand's desire to mount an expedition to 'spring' Napoleon from Saint-Helena (see *Les Espoirs de Napoleon*, Paris, Payot, 1938, chapters 24 and 25). Brice further reveals the number of denunciations in the Archives Nationales relating to the Appeal (see *ibid.*, p. 203). In *La Rabouilleuse*, a novel in which Mme Bridau sees a contribution to the Champ d'Asile as a case of maternal duty, the legitimist Balzac would call the Appeal «une des plus terribles mystifications connues sous le nom de Souscriptions nationales» before denouncing the Liberals' hypocrisy, both directly and through the mouth of Philippe Bridau in a scene which, pointedly, takes place in the café Minerve (*La Comédie humaine*, IV, pp. 300, 304, and 314; see also Anne-Marie Meininger's informative note to a mention of Champ d'Asile in *Les Employés*, *ibid.*, VII, pp. 1614-1615). In *L'Envers de l'histoire contemporaine*, he would describe it as one of several «tromperies politiques qui devaient être de grands, de nobles drames, et qui ne furent que des vaudevilles de police correctionnelle» (*ibid.*, VIII, p. 328). Much earlier, in the *Code des gens honnêtes* (1825), he had opined: «Après la sottise que l'on commet en épousant une femme sans dot, la plus cruelle c'est celle de donner dans toutes ces vertus patriotiques de dons, d'offrandes, de souscriptions monarchiques et patriotiques du Texas, du champ d'Asile, de statues à ériger, de palmes d'or et d'épées à M. le général *Un tel*» (*Œuvres diverses*, II, p. 217).

(52) Ingamells, *The Wallace Collection Catalogue*, II, p. 275. In addition to being a freemason and a Carbonaro, Vernet was a known Bonapartist (see N. Athanassaglou-Kellmyer, *'Imago belli': Horace Vernet's "L'Atelier" as an image of radical militarism under the Restoration*, «Art Bulletin», 68.2 (1986), 268-80). Balzac, in *L'Envers de l'histoire contemporaine*, describes engravings of his portraits of the Emperor and Poniatowski hanging on the wall in Monsieur Bernard's apartment, alongside portraits of Louis XVIII and Charles X (see Balzac, *La Comédie humaine*, VIII, p. 354).

(53) Athanassaglou-Kallmyer, *Sad Cincinnatus*, p. 65.

(54) Francis, Brazier and Dumersan, *Les Moissonneurs de la Beauce, ou Le Soldat laboureur*, Paris, Huet and Barba, 1821, p. 30.

(55) R. H. Horne, *The History of Napoleon Bonaparte*, revised edition, London and New York, Routledge, 1879, p. 500. The first edition, entitled simply *The History of Napoleon*, was published in 1841.

let's pupil Raffet that shows Napoleon digging alongside a second figure (presumably Navarrez), who likewise wields a spade[56].

The fact that the Emperor soon gave up the activity as a result of getting blisters on his hands[57] suggests that the attraction of the exercise lay at least partly in its potential for propaganda.

Nevertheless, the extent to which the *soldat-laboureur* became unambiguously identified with Bonapartism is clear from an anonymous ironical piece entitled "L'Indépendant. Histoire d'un libéral", which appeared in the ultra Catholic and Royalist organ «L'Écho de la Jeune France» in 1833:

> Le soldat-laboureur est un type si curieux que je ne puis m'empêcher de le définir.
> Le soldat-laboureur est fou de la liberté et il adore Napoléon; il est libéral, et il regrette le régime de l'empire; le seul mot d' aristocratie le met en fureur et il est lui-même baron ou comte de fabrique impériale. S'il s'agit de juger les temps et les hommes éloignés de nous, le soldat-laboureur conviendra volontiers qu'il n'est rien de plus contestable que les conquérans […] Mais parlez-lui de Bonaparte, le soldat-laboureur n'entend plus raison, il vous démontrera que les Bourbons seuls ont causé sa perte et celle de la France[58].

Leaving aside the question of dominant political affinity attributed to the *soldat laboureur*, it was inevitable that the idealized nature of the figure should attract derision in certain quarters, beginning, albeit in a mild form, with Charlet himself, who maintained with reference to examples of his own work: «J'entends un railleur dire au public: 'n'achetez donc pas ce cahier de croquis, c'est encore un soldat-laboureur'»[59]. Although the artist is not mentioned by name in Balzac's sarcastic description of the cultural tastes of the *épicier* (*La Silhouette*, 1830), it is likely that it was his painting, and its frequent reproduction, that formed the journalist-novelist's specific target: «Aujourd'hui un épicier lit Voltaire, et met dans son salon les gravures du *Soldat laboureur* et l'*Attaque de la barrière de Clichy*, prouvant ainsi que la poésie et les beaux-arts ne lui sont point inconnus»[60]; when, in 1839, he greatly expanded this text for *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, and added Vigneron's *Le Convoi du pauvre* to the list, he portrayed all three works as outmoded[61]. In the meantime, in *César*

(56) *Ibid.*, p. 499.

(57) «"Le métier est trop rude, dit-il un jour à Antonmarchi, je n'en puis plus, mes mains me font mal. À la prochaine fois!" Et il jeta la bêche» (O. Aubry, *Sainte-Hélène*, Paris, Flammarion, 1935, 2 vols, II, p. 150).

(58) «L'Écho de la Jeune-France», I.4 (1833), pp. 138-139.

(59) Quoted by Hopkin, *Soldier and Peasant*, p. 287.

(60) Balzac, *Œuvres diverses*, II, p. 724. (There is of course nothing to prove that Balzac did not have one of Vigneron's versions in mind, nor that his reference to "Le Soldat laboureur" was not intended to be generic). *Le Combat de la barrière de Clichy* was also a widely reproduced painting by Vernet, who had been awarded the Légion d'honneur for his participation in that defence of Paris by the National Guard during the Hundred Days; in *Les Petits Bourgeois*, Balzac appears, absent-mindedly, to attribute this work to Charlet (Balzac, *La Comédie humaine*, VIII, p. 175). Françoise Pitt-Rivers maintains that Balzac's description of Servin's studio in *La Vendetta* is modelled on Vernet's *L'Atelier* (*Balzac et l'art*, Paris, Éditions du Chêne, 1993, p. 56). It is true that Servin has Bonapartist sympathies, but the similarities between the two studios are only of the most general nature.

(61) *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, edited by P. Bouttier, 2 vols, Paris, Omnibus, 2003-2004, I, p. 24. As for the not dissimilar *rentier*, Balzac would allege: «En peinture, il tient pour Vigneron, auteur du *Convoi du pauvre*» (*ibid.*, II, p. 72). In *Pierre Grassou*, a mediocre work by the title character «tenait de Vigneron pour le sentiment» (Balzac, *La Comédie humaine*, VI, p. 1100). Petrus Borel wrote in one of his two contributions to *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* ('Le Croquemort'):

Birotteau, he had had an engraving of *Le Soldat laboureur* function, like *Le Convoi du pauvre*, as one of the defining purchases of the 'bourgeoisie de la rue Saint-Denis'[62]. His disdain for both Vernet and Vigneron is also apparent from the list of engraved works hanging in the 'Palais Rogron' in Provins, though on this occasion *Le Soldat laboureur* is not included[63]. As for Daumier, in one of his drawings (published in *La Caricature* in 1835), he portrayed Marshal Bugeaud as an example of the figure, echoing the soldier-politician's own claim, in a speech of 1832: «je ne suis qu'un soldat-laboureur». It was with the same figure in mind that Flaubert had the President of the Comices agricoles in *Madame Bovary* incorporate a reference to 'Cincinnatus à sa charrue'[64]. Moreover, the listing of a Polish and Fourierist painter he had originally intended to include in his novel under the name Grobowksi includes the information that: «il ne voit pas de plus beau sujet que le *Soldat laboureur* ni de plus grand peintre que Charlet»[65]. Likewise it is left to the reader to imagine that an engraving of the figure was likely to be found hanging on the wall of Homais's abode, as an accompaniment to his cult of Voltaire.

IV.

The *soldat-laboureur* was not a figure to appeal to Baudelaire any more than to Flaubert. Unlike Balzac, he despised the work of Charlet, whom he described as «un artiste de circonstance et un patriote exclusif, deux empêchements au génie»[66] . He went so far as to define him as an artist who sought to appeal precisely to the *soldat-laboureur*:

> Relativement au *calotin*, c'est le même sentiment qui dirige notre partial artiste. Il ne s'agit pas de peindre, de dessiner d'une manière originale les laideurs morales de la sacristie; il faut plaire au soldat-laboureur: le soldat-laboureur mangeait du jésuite[67].

As for Horace Vernet, the painter was in the eyes of the anti-militarist author of the *Salon de 1846* above all a nationalist, 'l'antithèse absolue de l'artiste', 'un militaire qui fait de la peinture' (and thus obsessed with the correct number of buttons on a soldier's uniform), a *feuilletoniste*, the producer of a 'masturbatory art' whose work was to be found on the walls of every type of dwelling[68]. He was, for Baudelaire, the

«Tout le monde connaît la triste et philosophique et populaire composition de Vigneron, cet honnête et modeste peintre; je veux dire *Le Convoi du pauvre*» (*ibid.*, I, p. 726). A similarly critical stance with regard to *Le Convoi du pauvre* would be adopted by both Banville ("Ancien Pierrot") and Zola (*Mon Salon*).

(62) See BALZAC, *La Comédie humaine*, VI, p. 173. Again the artist's name is not made explicit.

(63) See *Pierrette*, *ibid.*, IV, p. 60). In *Les Employés*, Phellion's salon is decorated with engravings of Vernet's two depictions of Mazeppa, together with Vigneron's *Le Convoi du pauvre*, «tableau sublime de pensée, et qui, selon Phellion, devait consoler les dernières classes de la société en leur prouvant qu'elles avaient des amis plus dévoués que les hommes et dont les sentiments allaient plus loin que la tombe!» (*ibid.*, VII, p. 969; the reference to Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* would have escaped only the dimmest of Balzac's readers).

(64) FLAUBERT, *Madame Bovary*, edited by C. GOTHOT-MERSCH, Paris, Garnier, 1971, p. 152.

(65) See http://flaubert.univ-rouen.fr/bovary/atelier/noms_propres/personnages2.htm. In *Les Comédiens sans le savoir*, it may be recalled, Balzac had had the hapless Gazonal encounter a Fourierist painter by the name of Dubourdieu.

(66) *Quelques caricaturistes français*, in BAUDELAIRE, *Critique d'art, suivi de critique musicale*, edited by C. PICHOIS, Collection Folio Essais, Paris, Gallimard, 1992, p. 206.

(67) *Ibid.*, p. 207.

(68) See BAUDELAIRE, *Salon de 1846*, edited by David Kelley, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975, pp. 161-162. Kelley points out that Baudelaire would tone down his denunciation of Vernet's art by the time of the *Salon de 1859* and *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (see *ibid.*, pp. 221-222). (Athanas-

detested '*grand* peintre', just as Béranger was the detested '*grand* poète'[69]. Although Vernet was given a room to himself at the Exposition universelle of 1855, he is conspicuous by his absence from the essay Baudelaire devoted to that exhibition.

That Baudelaire intended the title of his poem as, in part, a pun on the *soldat-laboureur* may plausibly be inferred from the cluster of agricultural imagery (*moisson*, *fermier*, *grange*) in the fifth stanza, which, in its specificity of detail and tone, goes beyond any of the traditional Holbein-inspired engravings and fuses any medieval colouring it possesses with the more recent rhetoric of the Napoleonic veteran turned farm worker:

> Dites, quelle moisson étrange,
> Forçats arrachés au charnier,
> Tirez-vous, et de quel fermier
> Avez-vous à remplir la grange?

The brutal directness of the question is immediately at odds with the comforting cultural cliché of the *soldat-laboureur*, reminding us that the poem was composed during the reign of 'Napoléon le Petit'. Insofar as the image of the skeletons' labour undoubtedly places them as prisoners of their social condition, whether the latter is regarded as serfdom or as the lot of the modern proletariat, the contract between soldier and society that had permitted the *soldat-laboureur* to serve as a prominent self-image of the French nation is here fatally shattered.

Thus, instead of confining itself to the anatomical drawings evoked in its opening line and deepening the reproduction of the latter's features and weaving their specific connotations and associations into a compositional whole, Baudelaire's "Le Squelette laboureur" blurs the initial image it evokes as its starting point through an embracing of further images suggestive of two fields of reference that are distinct both from the anatomist's world and from each other[70]. Yet, as will have been noted, neither the *danse des morts* nor the *soldat-laboureur* is alluded to explicitly. Instead, unlike the opening evocation, these two cultural traditions initially reveal their presence in the poem more or less anonymously, simply as a result of the way the images they spawn thwart the reader's attempt to hold onto the sharply defined mental image of the *planches d'anatomie*. Their subsequent recognition is inconceivable without prior possession of the cultural context within which Baudelaire had reflected on the nature of both art

saglou-Kallmyer states that «for Vernet militarism was a style of life and a lifelong passion» ('*Imago belli*', p. 271) and demonstrates, importantly, that the glorification of war and the soldier was indicative of a Liberal stance (see *ibid.*, p. 270).) On Baudelaire's view of Vernet and Charlet, see also M. Hannoosh, *Baudelaire and Caricature. From the Comic to an Art of Modernity*, University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992, pp. 97-98.

(69) *Quelques caricaturistes français*, p. 209. Baudelaire's phrasing was prescient of the letter Napoleon III addressed to the gravely ill Vernet in December 1862: «Mon cher monsieur Horace Vernet, je vous envoie la croix de grand officier de la Légion d'honneur, comme au grand peintre d'une grande époque» (quoted by V. Duruy, *Histoire populaire contemporaine de la France*, Paris, Hachette, 1864-66, 4 vols, IV (1866), p. 413; Duruy had no hesitation in designating Vernet 'le peintre favori de la monarchie de Juillet' (*ibid.*)). Balzac's assessment of Vernet's art was expressed in very similar terms in his letter to Mme Hanska dated [22-26 January 1843] (see Balzac, *Lettres à Madame Hanska*, edited by R. Pierrot, Bouquins, 2 vols, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1990), I, p. 637; see also *ibid.*, p. 649). This did not prevent him from wishing that Vernet had painted Mme Hanska's portrait. As for Gautier, he chose his words carefully when explaining Vernet's success by «l'intérêt tout national du sujet, l'exact sentiment moderne, l'exécution intelligible et nette» (Th. Gautier, *Les Beaux-Arts en Europe*, Paris, Lévy, 1855, 2 vols, II, p. 15).

(70) Leakey, who does not consider the inner dynamics of the poem, is dismissive of any importance attaching to the anatomical plate itself, alleging that it is a «mere pretext for a moral or philosophical excursion» (*Baudelaire: Collected Essays*, p. 113).

and society. Even then, such tangibility as the visual images possess is never more than fleeting. In other words, none of the three fields of reference is raised to the status of a master image to which all others are subordinated and in terms of which the poem is organized in its entirety, even if the 'message' it undoubtedly conveys (*clair emblème*), namely the poet-persona's fear that death «may not bring the "promised slumber", but a "treacherous" prolongation of the travail of life»[71], may be held to represent a continuation of the message voiced in the text accompanying the illustration of 'Un laboureur' in Marchant's *La Grant Danse macabre* (see Appendix)[72].

In contrary mode, the movement itself from anatomical drawing through *danse macabre* to ironization of the bourgeois stereotype of the *soldat laboureur* does not proceed in terms of a syntactic articulation that constitutes an explicit commentary. What is thus striking, as so often in Baudelaire's poetry, is the way the images are not confined to the function of illustrating the explicit current of thought to which the poem may at one level justifiably be reduced. Instead their multiple associations and the alluring hints of significance they contain possess an independence of any paraphrasable message, the role of which is as much structural as constitutive of the poem's *raison d'être*. The different references in "Le Squelette laboureur" are thus permitted to coalesce in a way that blurs the boundaries between them, with the forward momentum being provided by associative links in the context of the exigencies of form (predominant among these are those of sound, rhythm and rhyme, with, moreover, the octosyllabic verse form, as well as the very sparseness of the poem's constituent elements, being admirably suited to the spareness of the skeleton(s))[73]. As a result, the poem provides a valuable illustration of the way Baudelaire's poetry invariably proceeds from the tangible to the intangible. Instead of retaining consistently throughout the medical perspective provided by the *planches d'anatomie*, Baudelaire uses the latter's recognized association with allegory, not only to attract further examples of allegorical practice but also, and still more importantly from the point of view of his poetic art, to launch the creation of his own manner of allegorical representation that takes the form of a generic, intransitive allegorization of the real rather than the articulation of a specific allegory, the transitive nature of which demands completion through an act of translation by the reader[74]. In the case of the recourse to capitalization, 'Beauté', 'Écorchés', 'Squelettes', 'Néant' and 'Mort' are but the markers of this allegorization, the latter's product rather than its determinants.

(71) F. W. Leakey, *Baudelaire and Nature*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1969, p. 290. See also Leakey, *Baudelaire: "Les Fleurs du Mal"*, p. 46.

(72) With reference to Baudelaire's "Danse macabre", Bargues-Rollins notes: «Au déclin du moyen-âge, la mort change d'aspect et devient menaçante. Ce n'est plus une mort douce et chrétienne, porte de l'espoir et du paradis, mais au contraire une punition effrayante qui attaque l'homme et sa vanité. Tout comme le poète, l'homme en général est donc soumis à une destinée fatalement sans issue parce que liée au péché, et donc à la mort'» (Y. Bargues-Rollins, *Baudelaire et le grotesque*, Washington, University of America Press, 1978, p. 151).

(73) «Baudelaire, characteristically, looks less to the virtuoso challenge posed by the eight-syllable line as a vehicle of description than to the gnomic or suggestive effects of metrical concision. "Les Hiboux" and "La Pipe" […] have an emblematic quality, which in turn becomes a theme of "Le Squelette laboureur"» (R. Killick, *Baudelaire's versification: conservative or radical?*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, edited by R. Lloyd, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 51-68 (p. 54). An indication of the way the poem develops coherently, but independently of conceptual thought, may be seen in the way the 'agricultural' 'écorcher la terre' (line 30) is prefigured in the anatomical reference to *Écorchés* in line 12. The latter also has artistic connotations, *écorchés* being commonly found in artist's studios – see, for example, the references in Balzac's *La Vendetta*, *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, and *La Muse du département* (*La Comédie humaine*, I, p. 1041; X, p. 416, & IV, p. 660).

(74) For a rather different view of allegory in relation to "Le Squelette laboureur", see Labarthe, *Baudelaire et la tradition de l'allégorie*, pp. 195-201

It is this that allows the poem to present the impression of the oxymoronic combination of a meaning that is both absent and present, and a sense of elusiveness alongside one of precise and highly specific detail. Indicative is the way examples of the latter become the subject of a question that focuses on their uncertain identity ('quelle moisson étrange?'; 'et de quel fermier?'), together with the way the poem's 'message' is expressed both in interrogative form and through humble hypotheses ('Voulez-vous […] montrer?'; '[…] n'est pas sûr'; 'peut-être'. Strangeness ('ces mystérieuses horreurs'; 'quelque pays inconnu') is therefore at the heart of the real rather than constituting its transformation. The vision shifts seamlessly from ostensible subject ("Le Squelette laboureur") to simile ('comme des laboureurs'), just as singular and plural, as previously noted, coalesce without any acknowledgement of ambiguity or contradiction. A similar collapsing of distinctions presides over the representation of space and time. Space, clearly identified at the outset, is endowed with an elasticity that expands and contracts to embrace the cosmic as well as the snapshot of the farmer's barn. Just as the cultural traditions on which the poem has been seen to recall combine medieval (*danse macabre*) with Renaissance (Vesalius and his imitators) and the contemporary (the post-Napoleonic *soldat laboureur*), so the poem both incorporates, with the aid of a simile ('comme une antique momie') the additional archaeological image of an ancient civilization and creates the impression of a timeless world (in which the 'antique momie' and the 'vieil artiste' are as present as the future predictions) appropriate to the poet-persona's message and, albeit doubtless unwittingly, reminiscent of Grandville's title *Voyage pour l'éternité*.

Ultimately, however, the poem's own mysteriousness is held in check by the way it communicates, indirectly through the freedom accorded to the logic of the creative imagination, a sharp sense of the poet's state of self. In such a way, "Le Squelette laboureur" provides a magnificent illustration of the way Baudelaire's representations exploit non-denotatory and associative dimensions of language to embody the intangibles of metaphysics and ideology, offering the reader in the process an experience the powerful effect of which derives from its being simultaneously alluring and elusive, and thereby, it might be noted in the context of the English versions to which reference was made at the outset, issuing a near-impossible challenge to the would-be faithful translator.

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Appendix

Le mort	Le laboureur
Laboreur qui en soing et painne	La mort ay souhaite souvent
Avez vescu tout vostre temps:	Mais volentier ie la fuisse:
Morir fault cest chose certainne	Jamaisse mieulx fit pluye ou vent
Reculler ny vault ne contens:	Estre es vignes ou ie fouisse:
De mort deves estre contens	Encor plus gant plaisir y prisse
Car de grant soussy vous delivre	Car ie pers de peur tout propos.
Approchez vous ie vous actens	Or nest il qui de ce pas ysse.
Folz est qui cuide tousiour vivre.	Au monde na point de repos.

Guyot Marchant, *La Grant Danse macabre des hommes et des femmes* (2nd, expanded edition, 1486).